



PRESS RELEASE

House Armed Services Committee

Floyd D. Spence, Chairman

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STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN FLOYD D. SPENCE

FULL COMMITTEE HEARING ON KOSOVO

OUTSIDE WITNESSES

Today the committee continues its focus on the issue of the war in Kosovo. NATO is one month into Operation "Allied Force," and the air campaign has not yet achieved the alliance's objectives. This lack of tangible progress and the continuing disconnect between the alliance's stated objectives and the military means being employed has led some to advocate openly for the introduction of ground forces into Yugoslavia.

I remain strongly opposed to the commitment of U.S. ground troops in the Balkans under any circumstances. However, I also believe that this Committee has an obligation to explore, debate and, I hope, better understand the implications of a ground campaign in the event that the alliance goes down that path. At the same time, the Committee also has the opportunity and obligation to examine the advantages and the limits of using air power in an effort to compel Serbian behavior, both political and military, on the ground.

To help us in this effort, we will hear from two panels today. First, we will hear from a group of distinguished retired officers and analysts who will discuss the conduct of the air war to date, and the many operational and tactical issues associated with the "air-only" strategy. These experts are:

- Retired Air Force Major General Charles Link, who in addition to a long and distinguished operational career, also led the Air Force's efforts on the Quadrennial Defense Review;
- Retired Marine Lieutenant General Paul Van Riper, one of the Marine Corps' leading thinkers and former Assistant Commandant for Command, Control, and Communications; and
- Dr. Eliot Cohen, director of the Air Force's Gulf War Air Power Survey and professor of strategic studies at Johns Hopkins University's School of Advanced International Studies.

I have asked our witnesses to give us an assessment of the air campaign to date, to compare it to similar air campaigns (especially air operations during Operation Desert Storm), and to discuss the strengths and limitations of air power as a tool help the alliance meet its objectives.

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Later in the hearing we will hear from a second panel of expert witnesses who have been asked to discuss the implications of a ground war in the Balkans. I hope our witnesses can provide us with their insights into the numerous tactical and operational issues involved with the conduct of a ground campaign in the Balkans as well as discuss the considerable risks associated with such a campaign. Joining us today are:

- Retired Army Major General Bill Nash, who commanded the 1st Armored Division during the first deployment of U.S. ground forces to Bosnia in 1995 and who commanded an Army armored brigade several years earlier in the Gulf War;
- Retired Army Colonel Bob Killebrew, who spent most of his career as a commander and planner in 18th Airborne Corps, the Army's premier rapid-deployment unit; and
- Retired Army Colonel Harry Summers, author of the book "On Strategy," and a frequent columnist and commentator on military affairs.

I welcome all of our witnesses to the Committee today. Over the past weeks and months, we have spent a lot of time discussing and debating the Administration's policies – diplomatic and military – in the Balkans. The policy debate should and will obviously continue. In fact, the House will spend most of today and perhaps tomorrow debating the growing involvement of the U.S. in the Balkans. In setting up today's hearing, I have attempted to temporarily set aside the policy debate and focus on more detailed implications of military action to date, and possible military options in the future.